A

SERIOUS EXAMINATION,

OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS,

&c. &c. &c.

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SERIOUS EXAMINATION

OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS,

AS SET FORTH

IN THE PETITION,

NOW PENDING BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

BY THE REV. THOMAS LE MESURIER,

RECTOR OF NEUNTON LONGVILLE, LATE FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE OXFORD.

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A

SERIOUS EXAMINATION, *&c.*

THE Petition of the Roman Catholics of Ireland has at length, after some delay, and, it should seem, some difference of opinion among themselves, been presented to Parliament, and is now to be brought forward for discussion. It is needless to say that it involves a question of the highest importance to the state: nay, I may add, moreover, that it is one in which every individual is interested in a degree which superficial observers will not immediately perceive. And this would sufficiently excuse, or rather justify, any man in coming forward with such reflections and ideas of his own as he may conceive to be well founded and worthy of attention. But, in truth, the conduct of the petitioners themselves have made it perfectly unnecessary to seek for any such excuse or justification: for by the very terms in which their petition is conceived, and by the appeal

which they make, not merely to the wisdom and liberality of Parliament, but to the broadest of principles, to justice, utility, and sound policy, in the fullest extent of the words; still more by the publicity which they are endeavouring to give to their claim, as well by the printing and dispersing of their petition, as by paragraphs and essays in the public prints, or in separate publications, they in truth provoke enquiry, nay, they appear to rest their hopes of final success very much upon the influence which the public opinion must always in this country have upon the national councils, and which they expect in this instance to see exerted in their behalf.

The importance of this question will be the more apparent, as we consider the consequences which it involves, and which must necessarily result from the ground on which it is rested. For it is evident that the petitioners argue upon a system of comprehension the widest possible. It is one that, among other novelties, has of late years obtained a degree of popular favour from its apparent liberality. Of this system let me be allowed, in the first place, to observe, that the adoption of it by the petitioners must necessarily call for attention, if it do not awaken suspicion, since it is one which is least of all consistent with the religious principles which they profess; it is one, however, which if they choose to stand upon it, they must necessarily maintain in its utmost

extent: because it is plain, that if they should succeed in obtaining their object, it will be impossible, for those at least who grant it, to contend that any sort of restriction of the same nature can be continued upon any other description of his Majesty's subjects, nay, upon his Majesty himself. It involves, therefore, in its consequences, a direct change of the constitution as settled at the Revolution.

This of itself must prove to every thinking man, of what extreme importance it is that the matter should be well considered: it must shew how necessary it is for every one who will judge rightly, to set himself above every prejudice: he must not be caught by specious professions, he must not be deterred by the fear of unjust reproach. We are taught to do our duty "through evil report and through good report;" and it is under the strongest impressions of this obligation, that the author ventures to question the soundness of this principle, to the extent to which it is carried, and to rank himself in the number of those who conceive that the restraints which the laws and constitution of this kingdom still impose upon the members of the Romish Church, are neither impolitic or unjust, and ought not to be discontinued.

I will go farther, and venture to express my opinion, that such is the general spirit of the Romish Church, such is the tendency of all the institutions and doctrines which are peculiar to it,

that it never can with safety be admitted to more than a toleration in a Protestant state. I will add, that it is a wise and a sound policy, by all means, that are not unjust or oppressive, to discourage the extension of those institutions and those doctrines: that this is most peculiarly wise, and even indispensable, in a state which is so free as this is, and where every man has, or may have, so much influence upon the administration of public affairs.

Under an arbitrary government, such as are that of Russia and some others, the Roman Catholics may perhaps be left without any restriction, because in the appointment or removal of his ministers or servants, from the highest to the lowest, the sovereign is under no sort of controul: not only he may remove from office, but he may imprison or banish, or even put to death, an individual who shall disturb his government, without any of those forms, without any of that public and direct proof, which in this kingdom are required to be adduced and observed, before a man can be put under restraint, or even stopped in his machinations against the state*. In this country it

* This is evidently spoken of the *general* course of justice: and must be taken to be true, notwithstanding the statutes which occasionally pass for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the Proclamation of Martial Law, &c. These are exceptions which only prove the rule. The relief sought for by the Petitioners is against the *general* law of the kingdom.

is wise, nay, it is necessary, to prevent by restrictions and disabilities imposed by law, a danger which cannot thus be summarily obviated or effectually kept under.

Such at least was the reasoning of our ancestors when they enacted the laws from the operation of which the petitioners require, nay, claim as their right to be relieved. And it must not be forgotten by those who seek to be informed on the subject, that it is the institutions of our ancestors, at the very period when our liberties were most clearly defined and established, which are now brought into question, and that if indeed the members of the Romish Church have been made subject to "*Humiliation and ignominy," this was so settled by those very statesmen whom we have been used to venerate as models of political wisdom, and as being equally enlightened and liberal.

They thought it, I repeat, not safe, and not even compatible with the existence of a Protestant Church in this country, that members of the Romish persuasion should be allowed to have any share either directly or indirectly in the administration, of even the lowest departments in the state. They did it, as I think it will be found, upon good grounds; they did it after abundant experience of the mischief which was produced in their time, by the existence within the realm of

* Petition, p. 12.

a body of men, who were avowedly hostile to one part of its constitution, and whose consciences, were by the very nature of their religion subjected to the will and controul of a foreign potentate, most directly interested in subverting the government as it was and is established.

By the laws of this realm, as it has existed ever since the reformation, the King is declared to be the head of the Church as well as of the State. There is no Roman Catholic that does not consider this as a direct usurpation upon the lawful power of the Pope: it is a fundamental doctrine of his church: and, whenever an opportunity has been given, there is not an individual of that communion who has not shewn that he viewed it in that light.

This of itself must awaken suspicion: but that suspicion assumes a very serious character when we consider that the foreign power which has thus, in the opinion of the members of the Romish Church been dispossessed of its right, is one that in all ages has been remarkably tenacious of its claims, however founded, or under what circumstances soever set up; that it has scrupled no means by which it could procure them to be established; and in the present instance has certainly exerted itself to keep that part of the nation which owned its sway, distinct and separate, and even at enmity with the other.

It was not till after the clearest proof of the

existence of this dangerous spirit in its full force, not till after conspiracies against the state of the most atrocious sort had been discovered, that the first penal or restrictive laws were made against the Roman Catholics; and more especially in Ireland, which is the country of the Petitioners: the late system was not established until the experience of many years, and I believe near two centuries had shewn, the necessity that existed for guarding against the consequences of the Papal supremacy as it operated upon the minds of every member of that commission.

That such a necessity existed at the time when the statutes against Popery were enacted, one might hope would not be disputed by at least any of those members to whom the Petition in question is addressed: but indeed, a general reference to history may be deemed sufficient, more especially as the Petitioners appear to have made no direct assertion or admission upon the subject. It is indeed somewhat difficult to discover what are their sentiments upon this point; it does rather appear as if they meant, for very good reason no doubt, to avert any examination or enquiry into the question.

It is for this, as for other reasons, that it appears to me material, to advert with some detail to the language of the Petition, and to the allegations upon which it founds itself.

It may be first observed, that in all cases where

application is made to any Legislature for a removal of disabilities imposed by that authority, or indeed for any change in the law, there seem to be only two grounds upon which such a repeal may be prayed for.

First, it may be argued that the law was in its very commencement unjust and arbitrary, and ought never to have been passed; or,

Secondly, it may be shewn, that, however necessary it might be and proper, at the time of its passing, circumstances have since that time intervened, such an alteration has taken place, as render it no longer fit or reasonable to continue the law.

Upon looking over the Petition I find it exceedingly difficult, and I think every unprejudiced person will find it also, to ascertain distinctly upon which of these grounds the Petitioners make their stand: or indeed whether they do so clearly explain themselves as to shew that they take either of those grounds.

I will not deny that there are many general expressions of "*Incapacities and inconveniences "avowedly inflicted upon them," of "† certain

* P. 16. I quote the Petition printed by Keating, and sold by Faulder, and a host of Booksellers, which is evidently published by authority, with notes by an Editor, who is a strong friend to the claim, if not actually a member of the Committee.

† P. 20.

" restraints and privations absolutely repugnant " to the liberal and comprehensive principles re- " cognized by their most gracious Sovereign, and " by Parliament;" there are also assertions that they are " painful to the feelings of a loyal and oppressed people." I find the Petitioners urging the total abolition of them "as being not only " compatible with, but highly conducive to the " perfect security of every establishment, religi- " ous or political now existing in this realm."

I find them further, with a disinterestedness which I believe has no example, and which one really knows not how to deal with, stating, that not only they do not "*seek*" but that they do not "*wish*" to encroach upon " the *rights, pri-* " *vileges, or revenues appertaining to the Bishops* " *and Clergy of the Protestant Religion as by Law* " *established,* or to the Churches committed to " their charge, or any of them."

And they profess further, that their " *earnest solicitude*" for the accomplishment of the measure, " *at this peculiar crisis, arises principally* " *from their anxious desire to extinguish all mo-* " *tives to disunion, and all means of existing dis-* " *content**."

And this, they give it their decided opinion, will best defeat " the hopes of the enemies of the " British Empire, who meditate the subjugation " of Ireland†."

* P. 22. † P. 23.

And they conclude, with a hope that the House will in its "wisdom and liberality deem the several Statutes now in force against them, *no* "*longer necessary* to be retained, &c.

From this last expression and their reference to the present crisis, one might be led to conclude that the Petitioners mean to rest their application upon the particular circumstances in which this kingdom now finds itself, and upon the loyalty which is now testified and professed by them: but this is rather (I will say, in my mind, totally) incompatible with the general strain of the Petition, which complains of oppression and injustice in the most unqualified terms: and which arraigns the law in a way which could not be called for, or justified, if the law had in the beginning been just and politic.

I do therefore complain, as one of those who is to be affected by this change of the law, if it should take place, that the Petitioners do not state their case with that clearness and precision which is, and ought to be required, of those who are praying for a great and important change in the Constitution of the Realm; that their expressions are too vague and general; that from them it is difficult to discover the weight and foundation of their claim, or the manner in which it is to be met.—Nay, one sees a little reason to doubt whether they themselves are seriously persuaded of the justice and propriety of the pretensions which

they advance, or in what that justice and propriety consists. They may perhaps, at the very moment when they are putting the claim upon the broad principles of justice and utility, feel a consciousness that these are principles which are never, in the extent which they contend for, admitted or acted upon by the Church to which they belong: that on the contrary, so far from allowing to the Protestants a free participation of all advantages civil and ecclesiastical, they must, if they are true to their sect, in case of their gaining the ascendancy, refuse to every man of every other persuasion, the liberty of thinking for himself; they must allow him to have no conscience, but such as is ready prepared for him.

Perhaps this very consciousness of the incongruity between what they claim, and what they would allow, a certain apprehension of committing themselves too much, may have occasioned this obscurity in the Petition, and have contributed to render their language, as well as their ideas, thus vague and undefined. Whatever it be, it does not, to my mind, give the full idea of that truth and sincerity which are clear, because they are certain, and precise, because they have but one meaning.*

* Some of my readers may recollect that good old maxim of our law, that "Dolus versatur in generalibus," and I leave it to them to say how far it may be applicable in the present instance.

But not only the Petitioners have not stated the grounds of their application with sufficient clearness and precision, but they have even varied materially in setting forth the terms of their claim; and, considering that the Petition is not very long, and that it must have been well considered, this also is a circumstance of some importance. At P. 12, They "trust" that certain merits which are there stated will "entitle them to a *Toleration*, "not merely partial but complete. At p. 22. They say, that "the sole object of the Petition-"ers is an *equal participation, upon equal terms* "with their fellow subjects, of *the full benefits* of "the British Laws and Constitution." In one case they claim a toleration; in the other an equality. It is plain that these are not the same thing: it is clear also that it is really the last which they claim. The word "Toleration," was therefore, and could be, only introduced with a view of exciting an interest in the breasts of those whom they are addressing, and even conciliating the individuals of that church, which being equally averse to persecuting, as to being persecuted, has always been glad to grant to all sects, that toleration which she could never obtain from Romish priests, or Romish governors.

Let us now, from all this, collect, as well as we can, what are really the grounds upon which the Petitioners must be taken to found themselves, and in what manner they make them out.

From the repeated appeals which they make to justice, as well as to policy, one cannot but suspect that, but for the circumstance of the current of public opinion setting a different way at present, we should have heard of the inalienable rights of man. Certainly the Petitioners appear to entertain a notion common to many persons, that power is a matter of property, and that a man is as much entitled to a share in the government, as he is to be the holder of lands and goods. It should be remembered, that the grievance complained of is merely the exclusion from the great offices of state, and some of the subordinate places in the administration of justice, and, in some sort, from corporations. This is treated as if the Petitioners were thereby deprived of the most valuable rights; whereas, if this exclusion be necessary for the maintenance of the constitution, it is in truth beneficial to the Petitioners themselves. Every body must know that it is often expedient to take power out of the hands of the people, for their own sakes, and lest they should abuse it to their destruction. What incapacities and exclusions are there not created every time that a qualification for office is imposed? And yet who talks of this as an injustice? How many men, how large a proportion of the people are cut off from sitting in Parliament, simply because they have not three hundred a year of landed property?

The question is simply, whether there are good

grounds for the restriction; for, if there be, the restriction is not only legal, but equitable and just.

Strictly speaking, indeed, no man has a *right* to the government of others, not even they who are in possesion of it. It is a *trust*, and a most sacred one; it is a *duty* imposed upon them by that great Being who made us, and which they are bound to discharge with uprightness and with diligence. It is, in truth, cast upon them by his providence; and this is shewn by the great variety, which there is, not only in the governments themselves, but in the manner in which they have respectively been formed; all of which shew infinitely little of human foresight and contrivance in their first elements, whatever political wisdom may have been employed in the improvement and establishment of them. What alone the generality of mankind are entitled to, is the due and regular administration of Governments; that they should be ordered with impartiality, and a strict regard to justice. In the present imperfect state of our nature it has been found conducive to this end, to devise and impose certain checks upon the rulers. In this country this has been effected by giving to the people, through the medium of representatives, a share in the legislature, and a certain controul or superintendance over the administration of public affairs. But this is not, in theory at least, and should not be in practice, a

private advantage to the individuals who exercise it, but a public benefit to all; and they, therefore, who give no vote for members of parliament consider themselves as enjoying, and do in fact enjoy, the blessings of the British Constitution, as fully as they who do, or even as they who sit in the House.

I therefore, for one, do not see the existence of any grievance to be complained of; I do not, at least allow the situation of the petitioners to be what they state it, full of "manifold evils," "humiliating and ignominious;" a frustation "even of the privileges which they are capacitated to enjoy." A disadvantage it may be, but if so, it is one inseparable from the profession which they have chosen to adopt. They have subjected themselves to engagements, which materially interfere with their allegiance to their Sovereign, or, at least, are or have been supposed by the legislature so to do.

The true question is, as I have stated it before, whether this supposition be well founded; whether it ever was so; or, having once been so, whether it has now ceased to have a foundation.

The natural way of proving this, one would think, to be the shewing from facts that the state has actually never been put in danger by the Roman Catholics; that they never either rebelled or plotted against the government; or that if there have been any machinations of that sort, in which

any of their body have been implicated, it has been simply as detached individuals, and not as men acting at all in concert, or under the influence of any common motive; more especially that their motives or conduct have been no way connected with their opinions in religious matters, or their dependence upon the Pope.

This is a mode of proof, however, which the Petitioners have declined, or at least not entered into. In one place, indeed, they say, that "they "might well and justly insist upon the firm and "unabated loyalty of his Majesty's Roman Ca- "tholic subjects to their most gracious sovereign, "their profound respect for the legislature, and "dutiful submission to the laws." They choose however to wave this topic, and very disinterestedly to insist upon the great public utility of the measure, which as I say, brings us back to the sober examination of the question, whether such a measure would indeed "be conducive to "the general and permanent tranquillity, strength, "and happiness of the British Empire.

As however they have, notwithstanding, in the very opening of the Petition, laid great stress upon their loyalty, and have adduced some evidence in support of it; it may be proper to give it a certain degree of particular attention.

The first ground upon which they rest, is, that they have taken the oaths prescribed to them as "Tests of their moral and religious principles," and

they appeal to "the sufferings, which they have "long endured, and the sacrifices they still make, "rather than violate their consciences, (by taking "oaths of a religious or spiritual import, contrary "to their belief,) as decisive proofs of their pro- "found and scrupulous reverence for the sacred "obligation of an oath."

As to this, I must first observe, that the oath, which they have such an abhorrence of taking, is the oath of Supremacy, that oath in which is acknowledged the authority and jurisdiction of the King in matters ecclesiastical, as well as civil. This oath (let it be noted) they do not take *because they hold that the jurisdiction, and authority in matters ecclesiastical within this realm belongs not to the King, but to the Pope.* To my mind therefore this is no proof of their scrupulous reverence for the *sacred obligation of an oath.* They do not take the oath because it would be considered by the Pope as an act of rebellion against him, for which they would be excommunicated. This is only simply the case of a man refusing to swear allegiance to a prince, whom he considers as an usurper, and which certainly, whatever other merits it may have, is never alledged as "a decisive proof of his profound and scrupulous "reverence for the obligation of an oath." This refusal to take this oath, I cannot consider therefore as giving much weight to the other oaths, which they have actually taken.

As to these, the reader will recollect, that they are a substitution for the oath of supremacy, calculated to confine their acknowledgment of his Majesty's authority to matters purely civil. Those who take them do certainly at the same time renounce several of the most pernicious, and avowed doctrines of the church of Rome, as for instance, "they reject, and detest as unchristian, and impious, to believe that it is lawful in any way to "injure any person or persons whatsoever under "pretence of their being Heretics, and also that "unchristian and impious principle that no faith "is to be kept with Heretics, &c*." And they do also swear to defend the "settlement of property "in their country as established by the law in "being," and abjure any intention to subvert the present church establishment.

But what is very remarkable is, that in the same breath with which they adduce the taking of these oaths as a proof of their loyalty, they declare it to be "*painful to their feelings that it should be "still thought necessary to exact such tests from "them (and from them only of all his Majesty's "subjects* †.) so that it is clear that the very oaths, which they rely upon as proofs of their loyalty, they are desirous to have done away; and that, if they were admitted to all the privileges which they claim upon condition of taking these

* Petit. p. 8. † Pet. p. 11.

oaths, they would be still dissatisfied. As to their being the only subjects, from whom these oaths are required, can it be considered as a wonder or a grievance? For do not all other subjects of his Majesty take the oath of supremacy? And is it not because the members of the Romish church will not take that oath, that these oaths were substituted in its place, as a matter of accommodation, and favour to them? If these oaths are objected to, what oaths would they substitute? or must *they be exempt from all oaths*, while the protestant must still bind himself as before *.

But what follows is still more extraordinary, for they go on to affirm that not only "the moral "and political opinions contained in those tests

* It is truly ridiculous to hear the Editor of the Petition in his note enlarge upon this. "It cannot be very agreeable to "a pure, and well constituted mind, to be required publickly "upon oath to assure our neighbours, that we do not think that "we may destroy or injure them." As if there were no cause! But the legislature must be menaced as well as soothed; "Oaths "of this character (forsooth!) expose the Catholic to taunts and "derision; but *they do not tend to confirm his respect for the "authorities, which prescribe such oaths.* Very dignified indeed, and coming after certain recent events which so decidedly prove that the oath was not uncalled for, particularly proper and *respectful*! for such we are told, is the style of the petition. One cannot indeed but suspect that what makes these oaths so painful to the feelings of certain Roman Catholics, is the circumstance of their involving a condemnation of errors which are not thoroughly renounced.

" are conformable to their opinions," (which we must in charity believe) but that they are "*expressly inculcated by the religion which they profess:* that is to say, that the *church of Rome expressly inculcates,* that it is "*unchristian and impious to believe that it is lawful in any way to injure any person or persons whatever under pretence of their being Heretics, and also that it is an unchristian and impious principle, that no faith is to be kept with Heretics.*" And yet we find the direct contrary maintained not only by Popes, but by general councils; and yet by the 4th Lateran it is expressly decreed that Heretics shall be persecuted even to extermination, nay, that any potentate who shall give protection to them or refuse to assist in such extermination, shall be involved in their fate *. In the council of Thoulouse, adopted and followed in practice by the Popes, an inquisition was established for the very purpose of discovering Heretics, and subjecting them to persecution for their opinions, however privately entertained, or wholly kept to themselves. In the council of Constance, not only John Huss and Jerome of Prague were burnt, but they were so brought to the stake in violation of the solemn safe-conduct granted by the Emperor. Nay, to shew still farther the spirit of that communion, had it not been previously determined

* Fleury, B. 77. Dupin.

that Heretics should not be allowed any counsellor to advise them? and that every sort of testimony was to be received against them? * Were not these decrees acted upon? Upon what ground, or for what purpose was the inquisition established, and still subsists at Rome, in Spain and in Portugal, but upon this doctrine of councils, that it is lawful to use every kind of force and rigour, to exercise every sort of cruelty against a man, simply because he is a Heretic †? Is it in this country that we are to be told that these are not Doctrines of the church of Rome, where the memory of Queen Mary is still held in execration, merely for her obedience to these decrees, put in force by her under the sanction of a Pope's Legate, and he too, naturally a mild man; in consequence of which so many good and learned men were brought to the stake, upon no other charge but a difference in matters of faith? I have been used to think that it is unwise to make assertions so notoriously contrary to truth, that they can impose upon no man; and surely if ever any fact was established beyond the power of controversy, one would have thought that it must have been this of the persecuting spirit formally declared, and systematically acted upon, by the Romish church. But these Petitioners have now discovered that it is all a calumny, that in truth the Romish church

* L'Enfant Concile de Constance, vol. 1. p. 64.

† Dupin Edit. Concile de Thoulouse.

abominates all such doctrines; and thus, those very Parliaments of Ireland, which relaxed the laws in behalf of the Roman Catholics, which shewed them such favours, which are appealed to by themselves as vouchers for their loyalty, and good conduct, are by the most clear implication, arraigned as having adopted and countenanced a falsehood, and as having, under pretence of reports so unfounded, exacted from them an oath not only unnecessary and superfluous, but painful to their feelings, and such as ought not therefore to have been imposed.

Certainly, if it be contended that the Petition is respectful towards the Parliament to which it is presented, we cannot give it credit for much deference or respect, either to the laws which exist, or to the Parliament which in former times enacted them.

I have specified some of the councils, and have pointed at some of the Popes, which authorized the cruelties inflicted by the Roman Catholics, in various ages, upon those whom they deemed to be heretics.—If it be contended that such is not the doctrine of the Romish Church at this moment, let me ask by what Pope, or by what council it is abrogated, or how have these decrees lost their force? How have such practices been disclaimed or discountenanced? By what authority equal to that which passed, or which sanctioned them, has it been declared that these decrees and these practices are

unchristian and impious? To come closer to the point, what numbers are there among the two thousand, and upwards, of Priests, in Ireland, who will join in this condemnation of their doctrines? How many individuals among the three or four millions, which compose the Roman Catholic population of Ireland, are there, who will sincerely join with the Petitioners in this sentiment? The assertion, indeed, should be well remembered and weighed, because we may be assured, that it would not have been made, unless it had been thought necessary. It does by clear implication admit, that all their professions, nay, all their oaths, unless they be sanctioned by, and agreeable to the religion which they hold are little, or not at all, to be relied upon. If they have thought this assertion so material, the contradiction of it must be, at least, equally material; nay, the exposure of its falsehood must, in the mind of every candid person, operate as the strongest evidence against their claims*.

And here I cannot but observe upon what I conceive to be an omission in the very title of the Petition.—They present their Petition on behalf of themselves and "others, his Majesty's subjects, "professing the Roman Catholic Religion." If they really meant to rely upon their having taken these oaths, as an essential testimony in their favour, they should have added also, to the title of

* See the additional Note at the end.

their Petition, after the words last mentioned, of "others of his Majesty's subjects, professing the "Roman Catholic religion," these, or some such words, "and having taken the oaths by law re-"quired."—For if they are advocates for a body of three or four millions, as well as for themselves; is it not expedient to shew that the whole body have the same claim upon the Legislature which they advance for themselves? that they are exactly in the same situation?

I, for my part, cannot but consider the omission as purposely intended, and connected with the object which the Petitioners have in view, of procuring to themselves a total dispensation from every sort of oath.

I have but little to say with respect to the other sort of testimony adduced, and which consists in the language of the Irish Act of Parliament of 1778. I need only observe, that the declaration of the Act of Parliament is, that "it is reasonable and expe-"dient to *relax* "the disabilities and incapacities "under which the Roman Catholics laboured."—Now have not these disabilities and incapacities been *relaxed?* Were they not then *relaxed?* And has not even a subsequent *relaxation* taken place? Has not then the preamble of this statute been fully acted up to? Has not its purview been completely satisfied? When Parliament said that it was expedient to *relax*, did it mean *entirely to do away?* Is this the mode in which words are construed?—

The subsequent passage of the Act, stating that it would "tend to the cultivation, &c. that his Ma-" jesty's subjects of all denominations should enjoy " the blessings of a free constitution," &c. which are printed in Italics by the Editor of the Petition, cannot do away the meaning of the word "relax," or explain away the clear intent of the Legislature. Besides, I have contended, and do contend, that the Roman Catholics, as the law at present stands, *do actually enjoy* the blessings of a free constitution; to which it is certainly, as I conceive, not essential that a man should have a share in the government.

But further, if the preamble of an Act of Parliament is to have weight, what shall we say to the preambles of so many Acts of Parliament, which give a totally different account of the Roman Catholics? Shall I refer to so many speeches of the Lord Lieutenants in the reign of G. I. and G. II. which uniformly treated the Papists as the common enemy? What shall we say to the late Reports of the Committee of both Houses of Parliament in Ireland? To the extraordinary measures which have been taken for the security of the country since the very making of this declaration? Nay, must we forget that the very year after passing that Act of Parliament, a special statute was obliged to be passed for the punishment of certain disorders, (houghing of cattle, &c.) notoriously committed by bodies of Roman Catholics. And here I cannot but remind the reader of certain facts and dates.

The concessions in 1773 were immediately followed by the Act called the Chalking Act, against certain offences and certain highly criminal and cruel practices then very prevalent. Those of 1778, as I have observed, had a similar concomitant. The concessions of 1782 are marked by the outrages of the White Boys*. And when, at last, in 1792, not only all disabilities were removed, but the Romanists were admitted to the elective franchise, and certain subordinate offices, we find them immediately afterwards engaged in a most extensive, and atrocious conspiracy, which finally produced the unnatural and bloody rebellion of 1798.—Such were the effects that attended every conciliatory measure, as it was brought forward!

But, indeed, what does all this amount to? For, to return to what is the real state of the question, do the Petitioners intend to say, do they actually assert, that the great body of the Irish Roman Catholics are loyal— that the tenets of their religion do not tend to indispose their mind against a King, who is of a different persuasion?

To my simple apprehension they have not made any such assertion; there is no such positive averment; all that they urge to that effect is argumentative, and even that, as I think I have shewn, both insufficient and contradictory.—If the assertion had been made I could have referred to the

* See Sir Richard Musgrave, vol. 1. p. 47,

Authentic Documents which have been published upon the subject, both in former and in modern times, respecting as well the massacre in 1641, as the atrocities in 1798.—I could instance the priests who headed the rebellion, and who directed the murders in both instances: I could say, that upon comparing the events of those two periods, the spirit which then displayed itself appears to be frightfully the same.—I could say further, that although these two periods are singled out as being most prominent, yet the intermediate space, as well as that which preceded the year 1641, present a most shocking picture of disaffection and rebellion, of a bigotry most sanguinary and always alive*.

But I am willing enough to wave a discussion, certainly not solicited by the Petitioners; I have no objection to meet them on the broad ground of policy.—I wish to impute nothing particularly ferocious to the Irish; I have no objection to admit that they have acted as other men would have

* The old writers are well known, and as to the latter period it may be sufficient to refer my readers to the several reports of the Irish Houses of Parliament, to the several speeches of Lord Clare, and to Sir Richard Musgrave's History of the late Rebellion, a work which has, as far as I can judge, only proved itself authentic and correct in proportion as it has been attacked.—See also the very able strictures on Mr. Plowden's attempt at history, sold by Rivington, the pamphlet entitled Catholic Emancipation, and the Observations on the late and present State of Ireland, both printed for Stockdale.

done in the same circumstances. This will only strengthen the ground upon which I rest my answer to the prayer of the petition. It consists in this, that the faith of a Roman Catholic exposes his loyalty to too strong a temptation; it is, that his allegiance is actually divided; that only half of it is or can be paid to his natural sovereign; that that part, which is thus paid to a foreign Potentate, is also that part to which, perhaps, most importance is to be attached; it is that part which is connected with the strongest feelings of the human mind, with those which most decidedly influence his conduct, whenever he is sincere; and which, in fact, experience teaches us, do so operate on Roman Catholics in a surprising degree.

If I have commented so much at large upon the petition, if I have taken some pains to shew its want of clearness and precision, its inflated and exaggerated language, often adopted for the very purpose of supplying the defect of substantial argument, it is, as I have before intimated, because that want of clearness and precision betrays the weakness of the foundation; it shews a desire in the Petitioners not fairly to meet the question, but rather to divert the attention of the legislature to topics that are general, and which, by their popularity and speciousness, may throw a cover over the real merits.

I must, therefore, intreat my reader not to be diverted from what is the true question; to recal

his attention to those facts which will prove not only the lawfulness and the justice, but the wisdom and sound policy of continuing the existing restraints upon Roman Catholics. I will aver also that the best mode of preventing disturbance and of promoting union, (objects which the Petitioners declare to be primary and paramount) will be thus, (and thus only can it be done) to keep from the Roman Catholics the ability, and in consequence the will to restore to the Pope that supremacy of which he has been deprived.

I repeat it, as long as the Roman Catholics have a hope, that by the ascendency which they may regain in Ireland, (and which they now appear to be confident of attaining) they have a way opened to them of restoring the dominion to their church they are not likely to be peaceable subjects, nor cordially attached to their government. On the contrary, their attachment to Rome will be fed by their hopes, and it is only by cutting off those hopes that we can bring them to fix their views at home, and seriously to consult what the constitution has declared, and I firmly believe, to be the true interest of the state and of the Petitioners themselves.

Perhaps this can never actually take place so long as they continue in any the least degree to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope; but certainly the less of probability they see of establishing that supremacy in these kingdoms, the less will their mind be oc-

cupied by it. If they could be brought to dismiss all hopes of it, we might then have a reasonable prospect of seeing them united to us, not only in allegiance to their Sovereign, but in religious faith. Once cut off from the See of Rome I am persuaded that they could not long persist in the schism which separates them from the national church. And this is, indeed, what the Popes themselves have shewn them to be their opinion; for it should never be forgotten that, during the early period of the reformation, and for the first nine or ten years of the reign of Elizabeth, the Roman Catholics went to our churches and joined in our service*.

There is, indeed, no reason why they should not; for there is nothing in our belief but what they believe; no prayer in our liturgy but they may put up; not even any act or ceremony of ours but they may join in, except the taking of the cup in the communion; the denying of which to the laity is avowedly and confessedly a mere modern invention of their church. Nothing, therefore, could be more natural than their falling in with us in all respects. But it is for this reason that the Popes expressly forbid any communion with us; it is on this very account that such pains have been taken to keep them separate from us, and in a state

* See Fuller's Church History, and Heylin's Tracts. Preface to 1st Tract.

of hostility to the government. The one has always, in the views of the Popes, gone with the other.

It has been said, and it appears to be probable, that, while the late disabilities and incapacities of the Roman Catholics remained, their numbers diminished, and the proportion of Protestants increased in Ireland. It is now stated, with confidence, that since the first relaxation of the law the Roman Catholics have added very greatly to their population. If this be so, I am sure it would be a reason with me for lamenting that the legislature in any respect gave way; but it would be an additional and most powerful reason for not going one step farther. I should, even if the interest of the state was out of the question, upon motives of general policy, be sorry to see any measure adopted which gave encouragement to the Romish religion; I think it to be the duty of every good man, of every truly religious man, to discourage, as much as he can, the extension of a communion which avows so many pernicious principles, which has so essentially corrupted the true religion.

It seems strange, indeed, that in an age which boasts of its liberality, it should become a fashion to consider as a matter of indifference the progress of a religion which is the most narrow and bigotted in its principle; which avowedly obstructs, and has all along obstructed all enquiry into the foundations upon which it stands; which in various ways, and

by necessary consequence, binds itself to stop the progress of useful knowledge; and which, in the memorable cases of Roger Bacon, of Galileo, and of many others, has actually persecuted science in the persons of those who were its most learned and meritorious professors. But this is one of those contradictions which lead one to suspect either the sincerity or the wisdom of those in whom they are found; and which warrant the observation, that a man may so enlarge his views as to embrace more than is useful or rational.

I would, I repeat, discourage by all possible means, that which ought in plain terms to be called Popery; but which we are now enjoined to call by a name which carries absurdity on the face of it, the Catholic* religion. I would discourage it, not by murder, open or secret, not by persecution of any sect, for that my religion as well as disposition forbids; not even, unless the plainest and most imperious necessity required it, by such disabilities

* Catholic, I need hardly say, means *universal:* it is absurd therefore to appropriate it to any *particular* church: but this is a consequence of that *liberal* spirit in the church of Rome, which allows to no other communion the prerogative of being a church, or even of having a religion. In the debate on the repeal of the Test Act, in 1790, Mr. Pitt, it is said, admitted, that there was no great difference between Papists and Roman Catholics. I can see none. At least let me be allowed, without reproach, to apply the term *Papists* to all those who hold the supremacy of the *Pope*. If there be any Roman Catholics who disclaim that tenet, I admit that they stand on a footing materially different from the others.

as were formerly imposed on Papists, and have been lately repealed, because I would allow to all men, what I claim for myself, every indulgence which can be enjoyed without prejudice to the public.—But I do say that it is detrimental to the state that any part, the most trifling or remote in the administration of the government, should be placed in the hands of Papists: nay, thinking as I do, that our constitution is the best that ever was framed, and feeling that it is what they must aim to subvert, if they ever had it in their power, I say that it is for their own advantage to debar them from it. If I am put to the dilemma raised by the Petitioners themselves, very unwisely, I think, upon their possessing the elective, and being denied the representative franchise,* I have no hesitation in saying, that they ought to have neither. And I do think that the circumstances under which that same elective franchise was conceded, so soon after it had been refused,† argues not much for the wisdom, or the soundness of the motives upon which the Parliament proceeded in making that concession. If I were further pushed, and put to a dilemma still more strong, I should have no hesitation to prefer the repealing of every concession which has been made in this reign, before the granting of those further privileges which are now claimed by this Petition.

* Page 19. † Only the spring before.

The first wish of my heart in respect to the Petitioners is to see them united to the established church of this country, and this both from political as well as religious motives; next to that, and till that can be effected, I wish to see them peaceable and orderly subjects; which is what, for the reasons which I have before given, is least of all likely to be accomplished by the means which are in this Petition recommended, I can hardly say submitted, to the Parliament for its adoption.

By the Petitioners these sentiments will be condemned as illiberal and unjust; but their business is to shew that my argument and my apprehensions are ill founded; which is what I conceive they will not find not to be very easy. Possibly some other well meaning and liberal persons, according to the fashion of the times, will join in reprobating such narrow ideas. They will oppose to mine the more enlightened policy, cried up by the Roman Catholics, and the strong language in which they disclaim every intention to subvert the national establishment in church as well as state.

To such professions (and I am going to shew myself still more illiberal) I cannot yield implicit assent; and I will give my reason. I mean nothing disrespectful to the gentlemen who have signed the Petition, who, be it remembered, however, are a very small part, indeed,* of the body

* According to their calculations about a 40,000th part.

for whom they answer, or rather should do so; they may really have persuaded themselves that they have * no wish to "injure or incroach upon "the rights, privileges, immunities, or revenues "of the established church." But they may be deceived in that persuasion; if they are real staunch members of the Romish church, they cannot possibly entertain that persuasion; it is contrary to that obedience which they acknowledge themselves to owe to the Pope. No man can say, he cannot sufficiently bind himself, that he will not attempt, whenever the opportunity offers, to subvert what he considers as an usurpation.

If, indeed, Mr. Dennis Scully, whose name I see subscribed to the Petition, be the gentleman who wrote a book called "An Irish Catholic's Advice to his Brethren," he will excuse me, if I do not make to him, in its full extent, the concession which I have made to his brethren. There may be others too, who feel, although they do not write, like him. If, as it is stated in print, among the members of the Catholic Committee, there are persons who were active agitators and incendiaries in the Rebellion of 1798, the same reservation must be made as to them†.

But admitting all that they can wish, I can put no reliance on such professions, because I find

* Page 21.

† See Considerations on the late and present state of Ireland, printed for Stockdale, p. 33.

from history that the adherents of the Popes have never been backward in making such professions, or in breaking them when made. We have the example of Queen Mary, whose natural disposition was not wicked, who in other respects was merciful, and even kind, who yet broke through every restraint, and was guilty of acting, not only most cruelly, but against her word most solemnly pledged. She too began her reign with expressing the same *liberal* ideas which are now professed. In her first proclamation concerning religion, "She willeth "and straightly chargeth and commandeth all her "good loving subjects to live together in quiet "sort, *leaving those new found devilish terms of* "*Papist and Heretic and such like*, and applying "their whole care, study and travel to live in the "fear of God, exercising their conversation in "such charitable and godly doings, as their lives "may indeed express the great hunger and thirst "of God's glory," &c.* Could any language be more *liberal*, or more unlike that of a persecutor? And yet this good lady must at that time have had in her contemplation the cruelties which she so soon afterwards exercised. It is notorious, also, that James II. made the same professions upon his accession to the crown; it is equally notorious that he took the very first opportunity of breaking them. I know not why the professions which any persons hold-

* See Wilkins' Concilia, v. 4.

ing the same creed make upon the same points are to be more depended upon than those of these two crowned heads*: for certainly in their breaking their faith they could be actuated only by a mistaken and ill-directed zeal; every temporal motive operated the other way; the measures which they thus pursued, in breach of their faith, tended to diminish, and not to increase their power. To the former of them they produced only disquiet and dissatisfaction, and to the latter the loss of his kingdom. Surely then when we see those who are in full possession of power, merely because they are under such influence, acting not only contrary to their word, but to their true interests; when we see this take place in the case of two monarchs, whose veracity had never before been impeached, who were considered as persons of great sincerity and honour, which was the case with both, and is expressly related of James†; when, notwithstanding, we see that no reliance is to be placed on their promises in any case where the interest of their religion was concerned, shall we not be excused if we hesitate to repose implicit confidence in the declarations and even the oaths of men, who are, in truth, contending for rank and for power; who in

* When James made his profession and promise to maintain all the just rights and liberties of his subjects, it was said, "We "have now the word of a King, a word never broken." See Hume, vol. 8, chap 70.

† See H

the application which they make, and the language which they hold, have in view the advancement of their temporal as well as of their spiritual concerns?

I would willingly abstain from allusions to recent events, yet it has been repeatedly stated, names and places, and the most particular details have been given of Roman Catholics, who took loyal oaths at the moment, when they were the most deeply engaged in the late rebellion. The very men who were killed or taken with arms in their hands, were recognized as having but just before disclaimed in the most solemn appeals to God, every intention of rebellion. I will add, that by their allegiance, and I apprehended by their oaths, the Roman Catholics were bound to diclose all traiterous conspiracies against the government; I will ask, in a rebellion so widely diffused, and which must have been known to hundred of thousands, nay millions, how many came forward with such information?

All that I mean to infer from this is, that what has been, is, and ever will be; and to insist that it is wise and allowable to reason from past events to the present and the future.

But admitting every word contained in the Petition, and in the oaths of the Petitioners to be most solemnly observed—admitting that they are most scrupulpusly sincere—I say that they have it not in their power to answer for the great body of the Irish Roman Catholics, whose ignorance, and

whose bigotry no man denies to be both extreme and gross. We are told in excuse of the priests themselves, and by them, that even they could not restrain the insurgents from committing the abominable excesses of which they were guilty. How will these private gentlemen and temporal lords be equal to the task? If history do not deceive us, Lord Kenmare and Lord Fingal, both of them, have once already lost the confidence of the Catholic committee, simply by their shewing a backwardness in pushing matters to extremity with the government, and recommending more moderate measures. In the minds of the great body of the Roman Catholics the granting of the prayer of the Petition, will, as I have hinted before, only be considered as a further step to the establisment of Catholic (I will not merely say ascendancy, but) dominion. It will only be grateful to them, as it will appear to conduce to that end; consequently instead of making them contented and satisfied, it will only make them the more restless and turbulent.—In proportion as they see a nearer prospect of enjoying the full completion of their wishes, they will grow more impatient of delay; they will hurry more forward to the securing of their object. Those noble lords and gentlemen will either be prized or held in contempt by them in proportion as they shew the same disposition, according as they shall fall in with, or disclaim the most violent of their measures.

I do not, therefore conceive, that the granting of

the prayer of this Petition is the best method of tranquillizing even the Roman Catholic part of Ireland; but, further, in considering them, we must surely not forget that part which is by every tie attached to the state, which has ever been and still continues loyal; to whose exertions it is greatly owing that Ireland is still numbered among his Majesty's dominions.

What then, I say, are the feelings and the opinions of the Protestant part of Ireland, of the members of the established church in that kingdom? Have those feelings been consulted, or those opinions been taken? Do they believe that they shall be more or equally secure with Romish representatives, Romish magistrates, and Romish members of the cabinet? Is it of no moment that such favours shewn to the opposite party may fill them with disgust and apprehension? that they may be driven into disaffection, that their zeal may abate? or that they may be induced to take irregular means for the warding off of the danger which they may imagine they see coming upon them?

I trust, indeed, that under all circumstances they would continue loyal and peaceable; I trust it the more, because in them every religious sentiment cooperates with their civil engagements, to keep them stedfast in their allegiance to the King and submission to the law. Yet when we hear one set of people demanding an attention to be paid to their feelings, I think it but natural and just, that the same claim should be ad-

vanced on behalf of the other, more especially in a case where the experience of ages is all on one side; where it unequivocally establishes the merits of the latter, but deposes as strongly against the pretentions of the former.

My firm opinion is, that too little attention has been paid to the members of the established church in Ireland; that too many concessions have been made to the Roman Catholics in that kingdom. I speak particularly as to the granting them what they call the elective franchise, in the admitting them into the magistracy, the putting them upon juries. It is upon those concessions that they now found their pretensions for more. If other arguments were wanting to shew the impolicy of these concessions, it is the manner in which they have been received. Contrary to what was professed, they have produced neither contentment nor satisfaction; they have, in fact, been considered as the fruits of a victory not yet complete; what they have gained they have received but as an earnest of what remains behind.

For if this be not their way of viewing the subject, why did not the Roman Catholics of England, immediately upon the concessions made to their brethren in Ireland, come forward and pray to be admitted to the same privileges? Why? but because the Roman Catholics in England are few, while in Ireland they are numerous; because it was thought politic not to risk a defeat in the quarter which

was weak, but to push the attack in that which was strong. They know well that the one must follow the other. They acted wisely for their own ends; and we, if we are wise, though somewhat late, must act with the same vigour and concert. In Ireland little more than the citadel remains: in England we have not yet surrendered the outworks. Let us act accordingly. Let us not be deceived. The party by whom we are pressed have all the spirit of Cæsar,

"Nil actum reputans, si quid supereſſet agendum."

Should once the capability of being chancellors, judges, and privy counsellors be conceded, can we believe that they will be satisfied unless they actually obtain the possession of those offices? Surely not; even now it is avowed that the representative franchise is sought for as a means of obtaining the nomination to the offices which they are capacitated to enjoy*, and from which they complain that they still continue to be in almost every intance shut out.

We have, therefore, to contemplate not only the possibility but the certainty, if we are bent upon giving full satisfation to the Roman Catholics (for that with no less they will be satisfied is plainly enough

* Petition, p. 14. Note. The editor, says, he only is responsible for the notes. I cannot admit the authorised editor of a public Petition to be considered as a mere individual, yet this, indeed, explains the words of the Petition itself, p. 17, which in any other sense are unintelligible, or contrary to the fact.

told us*) of seeing our Protestant King surrounded by Popish counsellors; and if not in England, yet at least in Ireland every measure of his government carried into execution by Popish ministers, and justice dispensed to the people by Popish judges: that is to say, in the first place, by men who are taught to consider their King as an usurper, and in consequence of that usurpation involed in errors which must doom him to everlasting misery.

I leave to my readers to consider whether any great degree of respect or attachment is consistent with such sentiments.

But further, let us remember that it is a fundamental maxim in our constitution, that the King by himself can do nothing; that he must in every thing act by the hands and upon the suggestion of others, who are responsible both for the advice and the act. The appointment of Popish ministers does, therefore, in fact, make a Popish government. It will become folly to talk of this as a Protestant country. We know how often our sovereigns have been constrained to take ministers whom they disliked, to sanction measures which they personally disapproved: and, indeed, would not the change of the law contended for, itself be the strongest instance possible of such a force? If on this point the Sovereign be compelled to yield, where shall he make his stand?

* See Petition, p. 17.

Behold him then surrounded with Popish counsellors and Popish ministers. Suppose now what is surely not impossible, a Popish rebellion in Ireland. Suppose only partial risings or disaffections: what will be the situation of government? But let me go further, and suppose, what is not impossible neither, that the men who have now promised to maintain the rights of the Protestant established church should change their minds, and call for the re-establishment of the Popish religion? They spare not to tell us that it was the religion of our ancestors*, and they may by and by go on to say, as they must think, that it was a sin to depart from it; and they may act in consequence. But admitting that this generation will be faithful to their engagements, may not another start up which has made no such professions, and which may feel themselves bound in conscience to obey the mandate of a future Pope, and set about converting us by fire and faggot and the sword?

They must in truth so act, if they be sincere Roman Catholics: it is the natural course of their tenets; and what is to guard us against their most baleful effects in the case of a religion which makes it a crime in its members to seek for information respecting the truth, or the grounds of their faith? which does not even allow its priests to read books of controversy without a special licence from their

* See the additional Note at the end.

bishop? Which lays its very foundation in the ignorance of the laity.

I will not insist upon extreme cases: but surely it cannot be supposed but that there must arise in a kingdom like this, questions of a religious nature, or differences connected with religion. It is impossible that these should not be fomented and encouraged by the Pope. Whatever be the feelings of the Roman Catholics, he will not lay aside the hope of seeing his supremacy re-established.

In these or in any other instances which may arise where the interests of religion and of the different communions may be concerned, how is the Protestant King to be advised by his Popish cabinet? How is the constitution in church and state to be maintained?

What shall we say further to a Popish chancellor, and a Popish prime minister, disposing of all the dignities in the church and of the cure of souls in such a large proportion of our parishes?

We may well say, indeed, that human nature is short-sighted; for, at the time when the act of settlement was passed, when it was made a condition indispensible of succeeding to the crown, that the wearer of it should not be a Papist or married to a Papist, had it been asked in that parliament, "Do you mean "that at any future time he shall be allowed a "Popish council or Popish ministers," what would their answer have been? Would they not have said, "Do you think us mad? or shall we sup-

" pose that they who come after us will be de-
" prived of common understanding? How can
" it be supposed that a Protestant King and a
" Protestant Parliament should throw down the
" fences which we have established, should invite
" the danger, which we have removed to such a
" distance?"

I will venture to say, that even the present situation of the Roman Catholics would not have been thought credible only fifty years ago.

But this is not all; for if this Petition be granted, are we secure that the act of settlement itself will be suffered to stand? In the same manner that the Petitioners argue from the possession of the elective franchise to the obtaining of the representative: why may they not argue from the having of a Popish cabinet to the having of a Popish King? I have shewn, I think, that the one is at least as formidable to the liberties and rights of a Protestant church and state as the other. I am putting the case, not as what can actually take place in the lives of the royal family under whose reign we live, or whom we have in actual contemplation; not as what they would listen to, but as what may become the object of a future application to parliament, as what might serve as a pretext for future discontents. The petitioners tell us, that they cannot enjoy the blessings of a free constitution, that the privileges which they have been capacitated to exercise, are nearly

altogether frustrated *, because they are shut out from the parliament and the great offices of state: may they not hereafter, with just as much colour argue, that their having a capacity to be appointed to these offices is of no avail, while there can be none but a Protestant King upon the throne? That such a one must naturally choose to have all his ministers of his own persuasion? Will not the same complaint of "Exclusion, humiliation reproach and suspicion; †" apply to that case also? and surely the parliament which has been either weak enough or mistaken enough to yield in the one case, will hardly be expected to hold out in the other.

But indeed, there is another topick in the Petition which seems directly to point that way. These Petitioners all at once constitute themselves the advocates of their oppressed and injured Sovereign; they tell us that these incapacities which they complain of are "impolitic restraints upon his Majesty's prerogative ‡." How much more easy and natural will it be to say of the act of settlement, that it is a cruel and impious restraint upon his Majesty's conscience? And that the repeal of it, by conciliating all the Roman Catholics, in the kingdom, will prodigiously contribute to "the perfect security of every establishment re-

* Petition, p. 17. † See p. 16. ‡ p. 20, & 21.

" ligious or political now existing in this " realm *?"

I solemnly protest, that I do not think that I am stating either an imaginary danger, or putting it in an unfair light. It must be the wish of every sincere and honest Roman Catholic to reconcile his allegiance to the King, with his obedience to the Pope: this can (only I say, but certainly best) be done by the King becoming a Roman Catholic; it must be therefore " a consummation," by them " most devoutly to be wished." Formerly, it was an event which could not even enter into their contemplation, but as their hopes have successively been raised and gratified, it is become difficult to say to what they may not extend. Certain it is, that every concession granted, has only brought them nearer to the ultimate object which they may have in view: it is certain also, that it is in the nature of man to rise in his demands, whenever he sees a disposition to yield to them, and to encrease his pretensions in proportion to his means, either real or imagined.

But I may be told, that I have conjured up a mere bugbear, that I have misrepresented the nature of the Pope's supremacy; that the obedience which is paid to him has nothing to do with the allegiance due to the civil governor, that if

* Item.

any priest should preach up rebellion, he would not be listened to.

Now as to this, I will just say that the alliance between church and state has something so natural in it, that I will not easily believe that in any case the conduct of a man towards his rulers will not be influenced by his religious persuasion. This at least must be granted, that there are some creeds which tend more than others to make men good subjects, and to prepare them for obedience to the laws. But of all systems of religion there is none which tends so directly as the Roman Catholic to subject the civil concerns of a man to the controul of his spiritual rulers. The very obligation to confess to them and to receive from them absolution for what they shall pronounce to be sin *; the very circumstance of the Pope reserving to himself, or at least to the church, exclusively to determine what actions are good and what are bad; what is true and what is false doctrine; the denying to the individuals every exercise of their judgment in these cases, must surely have the effect of establishing an empire over the mind as absolute as extensive. Let a man only consider the conquences that result from the doctrine of purgatory, masses for the dead, indul-

* Let it not be forgotten that the Infallibility of councils and the Pope extends not only to matters of *Faith* but of *Morality*. So assert Dr. Troy, Messrs. Plowden, and Dr. Milner, and no Roman Catholic denies it.

gences and absolution in all their forms, with the commutation which is allowed for every sort of penance, whether in money or by other services, not forgetting the persecuting of Heretics: add to this the granting or withholding of those sacraments which are considered as indispensible: and further that all these are at the disposal and in the power of the Pope, or of those deputed by him: and then let it be considered whether it be possible that such an authority should not influence the public as well as private life of the individual.

What, in fact, is the information which history gives us in that respect? What is the language of the Popes themselves?

By Pius V. Our Elizabeth was solemnly excommunicated, and by that excommunication her subjects were absolved from their allegiance, simply because she was a Heretic: and every man who acted contrary to that bull, that is, who after that continued to pay allegiance to her, was declared to be implicated (innodated) in that excommunication *.

In consequence of this, we know what numbers of plots and conspiracies were hatched against her by Roman Catholics, who in so doing might well plead that they only followed the dictates of their conscience.

But to put this point in still clearer light, let us

* Wilkins's Concilia, vol. iv.

turn to the transactions of the next reign. After the memorable gunpowder plot was discovered and defeated, the parliament (by Stat. 3. Jac. c. 4.) gave authority to justices and others, to require of Popish Recusants to take an oath of *obedience* as it was called. It is observable, that this oath (which must have been framed in tenderness to Papists) took no notice at all of the King's supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs; it only required an acknowledgement that James was "lawful and "rightful King of this realm &c. and that the "Pope, neither by himself, or by any authority of "the church or see of Rome &c. had power to "depose the King, &c." Then follows the abjuration of the doctrine that Princes excommunicated by the Pope, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, and a declaration that the pope has not power to absolve from that oath. Now in all this what was there contained that was in the least derogatory to the Pope's authority in spiritual matters? What was there different from what the petitioners profess at this day *? Yet so far was the Pope from admitting the oath to be proper, or renouncing the pretensions which were condemned in it, that Paul V. immediately published a bull,

* Fuller in his church History B. 10. p. 42, tells us, that "this oath was devised to discriminate the pernicious from the peaceable Papists." "Nothing could be better understood than the determination of the Pope upon this, for it produced a long controversy." See Fuller, ib.

declaring that no Roman Catholic could take it without breaking the Catholic faith, and endangering his soul. ("Salvâ Catholica fide et salute animarum vestrarum*.")

And, because I suppose sufficient deference was not paid to this, another bull was issued to the same effect, in the year following.† Twenty years after this, the same injunction was repeated in another bull issued by Urban VIII. and one passage of this deserves particular attention, for it says, that this is not a question about an oath of allegiance to the King, but whether the holy sceptre of the universal church shall be wrested from the vicars of Almighty God. "Sed utrum sacrum universæ ecclesiæ sceptrum eripiatur vicariis Omnipotentis Dei‡."

Let us add to this, the bulls issued in the time of Elizabeth, to the Irish rebels, granting them indulgences and absolution as a reward for their rebellion, all which shew the utmost deliberation and determination to act upon the authority claimed by the Popes.

Shall I be told that these doctrines and these pretensions are no longer maintained? I ask again, where, or by whom, are they renounced, or declared to be departed from? So far from it, has not almost, in these our days, in 1768, the same objec-

* Wilkins's Concil. vol. iv. p. 430.

† Ibm. 431. ‡ Ibm. 471.

tion been made against any oath of allegiance to a Protestant King by a Pope's legate, and recorded and enforced by a titular bishop of Cloyne, with a recognition of the doctrines of the council of Constance in their full extent? * When in 1791, the leading lay Roman Catholics of England drew up a declaration, renouncing some of the most obnoxious tenets of their church, was not their conduct disapproved by the vicars apostolic †? That, notwithstanding, those lords and gentlemen persisted in their purpose, and took the oath appointed by Parliament, argues a degree of firmness and of good sense, which, I should hope, in time may lead them to something better, but which we are not assuredly to expect in the body of the Irish Roman Catholics.

Still the doctrines continue to be the doctrines of the Romish church, nor need we be surprised if upon an army of twenty thousand Frenchmen landing in Ireland, we should find them armed with a bull of a similar nature with that which was issued against Elizabeth, or with that which was granted to Tyrone, or Shawn O'Neil. I will add, we must be prepared also to find among the miguided multitude of Ireland, numbers who would act upon such a bull with as much fury and zeal as any of the persecutors of the thirteenth century.

* See Sir Richard Musgrave, vol. i. p. 46.

† See Catholic Emancipation, p. 38.

Indeed, I confess, that with all my respect for the English protesting Roman Catholics, and for those in Ireland, who have taken the oath, I am somewhat at a loss to account for their conduct.—By the oath which they have taken, they virtually convict their church of a continued system of imposture, of having prostituted the authority of religion to the most infamous purposes of worldly ambition; yet they continue members of that church, yet they profess a belief in its infallibility. There is no article of their communion, the supremacy of the Pope, invocation of saints, communion in one kind, purgatory, transubstantiation itself, which is more solemnly decreed than that which relates to the persecution of heretics, and the deposing of Princes and Kings, who are either heretics themselves, or abettors of those who are. This doctrine, however, they can reject as unchristian and impious, and yet adhere to the church which continues to profess it; nay, they still allow to that church an infallibility in matters not only of faith, but of morality.

I mean no disrespect to those who, I doubt not, are sincere in their professions, however inconsistent; but I must be allowed to lament the force of prejudice in a matter of such infinite consequence; yet it may be permitted me to say, that, if there were no other objection, I should think, that persons who can reason after this manner, are not the fittest to be placed at the head of an administration, or in

any office which requires the exercise of a sound judgement.

Can we wonder, after this, that the Petitioners should find it "painful to their feelings to take "such an oath?" Can we wonder that they should intimate a strong desire to be relieved from the obligation of taking any oath at all? For what oath can be framed, which will not, somehow or other, interfere with the tenets still maintained by the head of their church? What oath that will not have the appearance at least of a partial renunciation of their faith?

What shall be said further of those sturdy Catholics who, like Dr. Troy, and Mr. Plowden, insist that their church remains what it always was? "Semper eadem." Will these gentlemen tell us whether they admit the councils of Thoulouse, of the 4th Lateran, of Constance, to be real and true councils? And will they then tell us how they reconcile it to their conscience, to bear any kind of allegiance to a Protestant King.

I could say a great deal more, but I fear lest by too much detail, I should lessen the force of arguments, which appear to me irresistible.

As the Romish church is constituted, I repeat, it is impossible that a Roman Catholic can, with perfect safety, be admitted to any share in the government of a Protestant state. He himself ought not to wish it; for if he be an honest man it must be a snare to his conscience. I say this more particu-

larly of a state like ours, where a Prince is so much in the hands of his ministers. I say it of a country like Ireland, where the hopes of re-establishing Papal dominion, are not extinct. In truth, a Roman Catholic is hardly a free agent; he is so much in the hands of his spiritual guides, that he cannot depend upon himself; he is liable to be attacked in so many ways, that he cannot be sure of being able to persist to the end, in what he deems to be right.

Surely the man who cannot conscientiously support every part of the established government, should not repine if he is excluded from the administration of it. If he have protection, if justice be equally dealt to him as to all other subjects, if he enjoy toleration in its fullest extent, has he a right to complain?

It is sometimes of use to alledge authorities, I will, therefore, conclude with a passage from an author who has not usually been suspected of bigotry, and whose work is universally read. I lit upon the passage while consulting the book for another purpose. He wrote before the late changes of the law, and yet he approved of it, as it then stood. Speaking of the Papists, he says, "If once they could be brought to renounce the "supremacy of the Pope, they might quietly enjoy "their seven sacraments, their purgotary, their "auricular confession, their worship of reliques "and images, nay, even their transubstantiation; "but while they acknowledge a foreign power

" superior to the Sovereign of the Kingdom, they " cannot complain if the laws of that kingdom " will not treat them upon the footing of good " subjects*."

I have now done—let me only be allowed to recapitulate what I had in view to shew, and what I have shewn.

I say then,

That the Roman Catholics ought not to be admitted to any share in the government, because they cannot swear compleat and full allegiance to the King.

That to one part of the constitution they are, and must be decidedly hostile, because, according to their principles, it is an usurpation upon a power, whose authority they own and submit to.

That this power is a foreign power, and one that has ever been particularly active in the maintenance, or recovery of the rights which it claims, however extravagant or ill founded.

That the inference which is naturally to be drawn against the policy of trusting the Roman Catholics with any share in the government, from this substraction of their allegiance, and their obedience to a foreign potentate, is confirmed by long and uniform experience, and even by the most recent events.

That the most dangerous and extravagant pre-

* Blackstone's Comm. vol. iv.

tensions of the Romish church have always been acted upon by the Popes, and are not to this day disclaimed; and that by their ministers in Ireland they are at this hour, as far as we are enabled to judge, maintained in their full extent.

That it would be both nugatory and incongruent to refuse to the Sovereign himself, the liberty of professing the Romish religion, or even of marrying a Papist, and yet to allow him the choice, or expose him to the hazard, of being advised, and of doing every act of Government through the medium of Popish ministers and counsellors.

That, therefore, the prayer of the Petition involves in its consequences, the repeal of the act of settlement.

Surely these are points which cannot be too deliberately considered, and of the importance of which every man ought to be fully apprized.

If in laying them before the public, I have expressed myself with warmth, or used what may be called strong language, I trust that it will appear, that I have not done it without reason. Any man who only reads the shameful misrepresentations and falsehoods, which are huddled together in Mr. Plowden's three quarto volumes, and who sees that even after their most solemn detection and exposure, he still continues to be cited by the writers on that side of the question; who considers further the extraordinary assertions advanced even in the Petition to Parliament, may think that a little ho-

nest feeling is not out of season. Indeed I think the time is come for every man to speak out. I have, however, avoided saying much of recent events, or of the conduct of particular persons. I have kept myself to the more general statement of the question, and to shewing the consequences which, if the Roman Catholics are true to themselves, and to their principles, (and they are not to be suspected of the contrary) must follow from admitting them to a share of the government. I solemnly believe that their views and their expectations have no bounds: I speak of them in general, and subject to such exceptions as every man will make: and I appeal not only to the history of past years, to the spirit of their religion, and to the experience which we have had of its operation; but to the very terms in which their demands are stated, and to the manner in which they have brought forward, or rather, I might say, avoided to bring forward the merits of themselves and their predecessors. It was for this reason that I thought it material to examine somewhat at length, the language of the Petition, as well as the grounds upon which their claims have been usually rested. I have done it, because, if the foundation is bad, the whole building must fall. And surely it is not to be denied that every man, or body of men, who rest their case upon false grounds, by that very act stand self convicted. I have thus shewn that as there was good policy, and true wisdom, in excluding the

Roman Catholics from any civil office, when the exclusion first took place, so there exist the same or as strong reasons for continuing it, as there were originally for establishing it.

If there wanted any further arguments, I would bid my reader look to the present situation of the Pope, nominated to the See of Rome by the bitter and avowed enemy of this country, existing but by his permission, and suffered by him to exist only from motives purely political. Can we doubt of his subserviency in every particular to the designs of Buonaparte against this country? Can we suppose that either bulls or briefs, influence public or private, that any of the implements of supersition will be kept back, if they can be employed with effect in furthering the purposes of treason and rebellion, in detaching the subject from his allegiance to the Sovereign? What the effect of these endeavours may be, I will not presume to say, I sincerely wish it may be less than I apprehend, nay, that they may totally fail. All that I aver, is, that they will be employed; and, under those circumstances, I think, as I have said before, that it is even mercy to the Roman Catholics, not to put them in situations, where they may be tempted to act contrary to their real interests as well to their duty.

My firm belief is, that as things are, without a Protestant church, our constitution cannot be preserved; if, therefore, the Petitioners really feel

that veneration for it which they profess, they should be as ready as we, to deprecate every tampering with its foundations.

The fact is, that the whole tendency of the Romish religion, is, to deprave the mind, and to prepare it for the most abject slavery. The Pope has always been, and continues to be, as far as he can, the most absolute of despots; such at least is the doctrine of his church. The empire, which his predecessors established, was over the mind; it commenced in fraud; it maintained itself by a system of ignorance, by requiring implicit obedience, and forbidding every sort of inquiry into the grounds upon which that obedience was exacted. These are just the maxims which suit the present ruler of France; which may be employed with full effect among the lower classs of Irish Roman Catholics, and which their priests are not backward to employ.

Still shall it be said, that there is no foundation for this. How many times have Irish Catholics proffered their services, nay, tendered their crown to foreign potentates? When General Humbert landed in Ireland, by what description of men was he joined? Were they not, *exclusively*, to a man, Roman Catholics? What need of any further instance? What can we say stronger of any set of men, than that they preferred Buonaparte to George the Third?

It is for these reasons that I consider it as par-

ticularly mischievous at this moment, by any measure whatever, to strengthen the hands of those who must necessarily be objects of suspicion. At any time, I should have thought, that the granting of this Petition, must put our establishment in church and state to the most imminent hazard; but at the present juncture, it leads to no less than the total destruction of the country.

Additional Note to p. 23.

Among the most extraordinary assertions ever made in an age or country where the access to information was not absolutely debarred, we may I think, rank the following, taken from a pamphlet written by an Irish Barrister; one too who writes with a great shew of moderation *. "In truth, the *regular* doc- " trines of the church of Rome upon this subject, (that of the imputed doctrine of exclusive salvation,) are *the most lenient* and " *forbearing* of any religious association whatsoever. The " several reformed churches were not out of their cradle, when " they began to lisp that to dissent from them was damnable. I " believe that there is a clause of this import in every creed that " has been framed since, and exclusive of that of the Apostles. " *The Church of Rome classes among crimes, not mere error, but* " *contumacy and obstinacy: and explains itself favourably with* " *respect to those, whose ignorance is the effect of situation*, or " *invincibly impressed by honest, though mistaken conviction.*"

This is really practising too far upon our credulity!—Where did the gentleman gather this? Why, from certain worthy divines whom he does not name, and a Mr. Milner, lately made a Bishop, whose words he does not quote. He will tell us by and by whether the "regular" doctrines of the church are those which are preached by obscure divines, or those which are contained in the decrees of councils and of Popes. He will tell us too, how it was discovered that the faith of Hooper, of Cranmer, of Latimer, and of Ridley, was obstinacy, and not honest conviction. He will tell us how it was that down to the reign of Louis XVI. at least, a Protestant minister found in France in the exercise of his function, was,

* Thoughts on the Roman Catholic Clergy, by Theobald M'Kenna, Esq.

without any question, sent to the gallies. In France too, which he tells us (p. 13) had a church *the most enlightened and liberal that ever existed!!!* Has this gentleman forgotten that most favourite argument of that as of all other Romish churches, which is said to have converted Henry IV. and is still used in England, as well as in Ireland, that "Heretics themselves confess that "Roman Catholics may be saved, whereas these maintain that "there is no salvation out of the church. What madness then "were it for a man not to go over to the Roman Catholics, who "may be saved in the judgment of their adversaries?" This is taken from a book printed in Dublin in this enlightened age*. In Butler's Catechism, that which is put into the hands of Irish Roman Catholics, is it not stated that "no one can be saved out "of the Catholic Church †?" Where will this, or any similar doctrine, be found advanced by any Protestant church of itself? But, forsooth, we have a creed, the athanasian, which anathemases those who do not believe the Catholic faith; as if this were not a creed, which we found in the Romish church? and, as if any Protestant construed the anathema in the strict sense in which it is considered by Papists? But let the reader only advert to historical facts. In the reign of Mary we know how many Protestants were burnt. In the reign of Elizabeth did the Roman Catholics suffer for their faith? Provoked as the Protestants were, did they retaliate?

But we need wonder at nothing; for this gentleman also tells us that the Pope's supremacy is not formidable—why? because it "applies not to the affairs of ordinary life," but to the "feelings of conscience?" Upon what then do the "feelings of conscience" operate? Is it upon the affairs of *extraordinary* life? It operates, it seems, to the burning of Heretics, to the driving them into exile. For by what else was Mary, or was Louis XIV. actuated but by conscience? a weak and a misguided

* See Sir Richard Musgrave, vol. ii. p. 203.

† See Catholic Emancipation, p. 35.

conscience indeed, but one rendered so weak and so misguided by Romish priests.

Let me add a word more as to another of the "Fifty Reasons in favour of the Roman Catholic Religion," viz. "That during the five first ages there was no other religion."—This is true if spoken of what it has in common with our church; but most false if spoken of its peculiarities. All that we blame in that church has a known date subsequent to that period, beginning from the supremacy of the Pope down to the withholding of the Scriptures from the laity. Masses, purgatory, celibacy of the clergy, indulgences, all are unquestionably of modern invention. So that it is in truth, the doctrines of Rome that are novel. But the Papists ask us "where was your church before Luther?" If this be spoken of the universal church, the answer is, "wherever the name of Christ was invoked." If of the particular church of England, it was, where it is now, where it was first established, in the same age, and, as it is believed, by the same apostle as that of Rome. It did indeed, afterwards unfortunately admit the doctrines and the jurisdiction of that see; it became corrupt; and thus both the authority and the doctrine came to us through polluted channels. But at the reformation they were cleansed, and the stream now runs pure.

When, therefore, we are told triumphantly, by some writers, that the Roman Catholic religion was the religion of the Henry's and of the Edward's, they add nothing to the authority of those corruptions, unless they shew us that these monarchs so revered, willingly embraced them, having the option of purer doctrines. They lived in times of comparative and general ignorance. Yet it will be found that most of them, even with the disadvantage of being betrayed by their clergy, struggled hard against the usurpations of the Roman pontiffs. For this I appeal to the statutes of præmunire and against provisors, in force, for what I know, to this day; and which shew that the Pope was not suffered by them to do what he does at this day, both in England and Ireland.

I hope to be excused this sort of digressive note, if indeed it be

not intimately connected with the subject of the Petition. Experience has shewn us that it is not a good reason for suffering assertions to pass uncontradicted, that they have been often made and often refuted. The truth is, that a long and uninterrupted enjoyment of any blessing is apt to make us excessively and unwisely secure in the possession of it. The first of blessings I conceive to be the liberty of worshipping God, according to his word. The next, a free constitution in the state. It cost our ancestors much labour, much blood, and many a hard struggle to establish the one as well as the other. We must not expect to be allowed to maintain them, without a portion, at least, of the same sort of exertion.

FINIS.

Barnard and Sultzer, Printers, Water-Lane, Fleet-Street.